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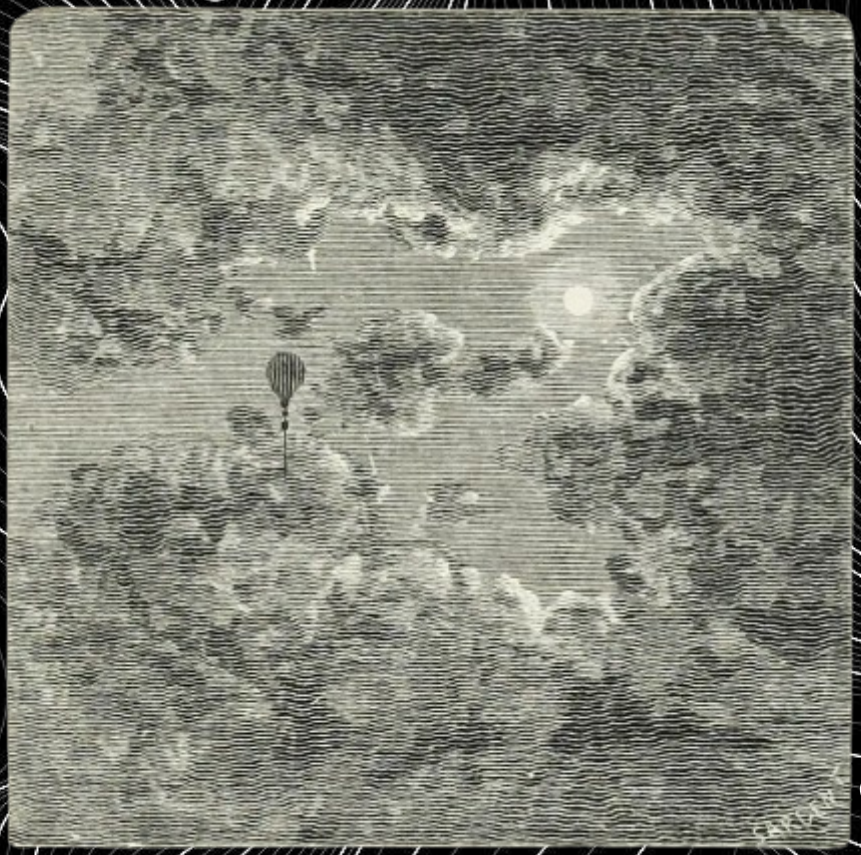
JAN '26

SLACKERFRIEND



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INTERVIEWS WITH

KESTRELS

amity echo

SPACE-BUD

CONDUCTOR

Plus:

TOP [redacted] OF 2025!

We're Rocking & Rolling now in 2026!

FEATURES

KESTRELS interview

amity echo interview

SPACE-BUD interview

CONDUCTOR interview

2025 was a whirlwind; of emotions, changes,& getting back to the roots; historical research, and music in general. With *Slackerfriend #2* published last month (Dec),I quickly strove to complete more interviews for *Slackerfriend #3*. I hope you enjoy the following discussions with artists across Canada,from Nova Scotia, all the way to Ottawa, ON. Enjoy ☺

Thank you to everyone who helped with Slackerfriend#3, including, but not limited to: the readers, Friends & Family, supporters, many bands who took the time out of the Holiday season to talk with me, including: TARA (Amity Echo), Paul Chiasson (SPACE BUD),CONDUCTOR, + Chad Peck (Kestrels).

Lots more interviews are in store for the next issue(Feb.'26), incl. PAINTING PURPLE,COMPANY HOUSE, Ellen Reade (Brunch Club, Dead Friends) and Gardener, and more...

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BETTER WONDER: CHAD PECK OF KESTRELS

In a December Zoom interview, I spoke with Chad Peck of Halifax-based band Kestrels about musical beginnings, the art of music production, the band's journey, and what lies ahead in their future.

Osty: Your first band before The Kestrels, was that The Medium Mood?

Chad Peck: Yes. My first band was called The Medium Mood. We were actually called Safety Scissors first. I assume you're younger than I am,is that fair to say?

O: You're correct.

C: Right. You probably missed the MySpace era. We started as Safety Scissors,& I started my label around the same time. We got a C&D letter before we even had a record out because there was an electronic artist on Warp Records called Safety Scissors. So we changed the name to The Medium Mood shortly after starting. That was my first band, back in 2006 or so.

O: Was that the first time you started playing?

C: I played in a band in high school. Really into guitar in grade 7. Nirvana was the gateway, like it was for so many people.I lived in the country where there was nothing to do, and it was pre-internet, so I spent my time playing guitar, watching Live Tonight Sold Out or listening to records. That was my gateway into alt rock & that aggressive guitar style.

C: I started a band with some friends in high school and during the first year of university. We were called Times 10. We only played a couple of shows and made a few demos. We never toured or really got off the ground, but we jammed a lot and wrote lots of songs. I've been into it since then, it's been a lifelong passion.

O: Were there any influences besides Nirvana that shaped those early bands?

C: Early on, Nirvana, Smashing Pumpkins, and the band Ash. I just saw Ash last weekend when I was in Ireland. They were a huge influence on me. There was also a local band called Wizards, W-I-Z-U-R-D, on Ant Records. They went to my high school and were a bit older than me. They played a song called "Snooze Button" at our school talent show, and I couldn't believe how cool it was. Fun, melodic, loud, kind of crazy, but really hooky. Seeing people from my hometown making cool records was huge. Most of my early influences were major-label rock you heard on the radio, since this was all pre-internet.

O: When you first started recording your own music, what pulled you to the studio side of things?

C: In my early days, I lived about 95 minutes from Halifax. A lot of the cool stuff was happening there, and I couldn't get to it. Before you have a driver's license, living in rural Nova Scotia, Halifax might as well have been Toronto or LA. I just had records to listen to, and I didn't really see a lot of live music. It was fascinating to me how you could make these records with all these crazy sounds. I didn't know anything about overdubbing, studio techniques, microphones. All the stuff I know a lot about now, but I was obsessed with sound and how overwhelming it could be.

C: When I started meeting people from Halifax in particular, a lot of those bands, like Eric's Trip, Fugazi,or Steve Albini 's production style, were really alien to me at the time because I'd never really seen live music. All I'd ever had were studio recordings, so I leaned into that.

O: Thinking back on those early recordings, how much of what you're doing now can you trace back to that trial-and-error period?

C: A lot of the roots of what I do were in those early sessions. We all listened to the same records, so our reference points were similar. We were already thinking about overdubs, distorted bass, drum dynamics, and arrangement.

C: The songs themselves weren't that great, they sounded like Green Day, Nirvana, or NOFX songs. But the studio-forward approach was there, and that's still how I think about making records now. Most people will never see your band live, so why not deliver the best possible representation of the music? I've also played in punk bands with stripped-down recording approaches, which was fun and helped me learn when to pull things back. You steal ideas constantly from people you meet over the years. When you're 17 and haven't met other musicians, you have one idea. As you branch out, you borrow, modify, and evolve.

O: You spoke about your earlier band, Times Ten. Did you record any material that was never released?

C: Yes, we did a session in the early days. Terry Puliem had a studio on Gottingen StreetSound Market moved a few times. We recorded there because we knew someone in recording arts at NSCC. I don't know what happened to those tapes. We also did a lot of boombox demos at home.

C: We recorded one more professional session with someone who tried to start a studio in Enfield around 2001. We finished one full song and had a bunch of instrumental demos, but we never put it out. We probably uploaded an MP3 to a website a million years ago.

C: I'm remembering now, it was a pretty cool song. It kind of sounds like what Kestrels do now, just a bit simpler.

O: As the Kestrels albums progressed, how did your songwriting change from the earliest albums to Better Wonder?

C: The earliest material included a seven-inch called Seaside. I was trying to incorporate math-rock elements inspired by bands like North of America and The Plan. I remember sitting in bed trying to write complicated guitar parts and getting frustrated. Eventually I just played it straight, wrote the opening riff, and realized it worked much better.

C: The first full-length, Primary Colour, was a proof-of-concept record. It wasn't very thought out, we just wrote ten songs and recorded them. Once that came out and we started playing live, my songwriting became more concise and intentional.

C: I like using unusual chords and key changes without making them obvious. Over time, records started reacting to each other. One record had too many guitar solos, so the next stripped things back. That felt constrictive, so the next loosened up. Better Wonder is darker and heavier.

C: I see all the records as one conversation rather than separate entities. Now I write far more songs25 demos instead of tenwhich makes the process less precious and less anxiety-inducing.

O: Touring has been a big part of the band. How has that influenced your writing?

C: Playing songs live teaches you what works and what doesn't. Sometimes songs are built entirely in the studio and haven't been played together before recording. When you bring them live, you realize certain parts don't translate.

C: Touring also exposes you to other bands' ideas; loops, arrangements,& tone balance. Whether it's huge bands like Bob Mould or Dinosaur Jr., or unknown bands no one will ever hear, there's always something inspiring.

O: How was touring with Bob Mould and Dinosaur Jr.?

C: The Bob Mould tour in 2021 felt surreal. We played eight nights in incredible clubs across the U.S. They were such a powerful live bandfive songs in a row without stopping. It was inspiring, and we held our own on those big stages.

C: We opened one secret show for Dinosaur Jr. at a bike shop. It was packed, and they only played new songs. Standing in front of those amps was incredible.

O: Better Wonder covers a lot of ground lyrically. What headspace were you in?

C: I bought the house I grew up in, out in the country, and lived there alone. It was isolated, especially during brutal Nova Scotia winters. The songs reflect that isolation.

C: Some songs came from a solo project I recorded years earlier, I Need Secrets, that never got released. I pulled several of those songs into Better Wonder. Others came from later experiences, including the mass shooting in Portapique, which happened close to my home and involved people I knew. That influenced the song "Nightlife."

C: Better Wonder bookends that period of my life: identity, isolation, and growing into adulthood.

O: Looking back on your career, what were major turning points?

C: Writing "Seaside" was a big one. I knew it was a good song. Then Grant Lawrence from CBC put it on his Top 100 without us even sending promo. Getting signed to Sonic Unyon was huge!

C: Later, working with John Agnello on mixing was another turning point. Hearing genuine validation from someone like that really sticks with you.

C: Some turning points are harder, realizing certain lineups aren't working and needing to change them. But it always feels like something cool is just around the corner.

Visit https://kestrels.bandcamp.com/ to hear/purchase their music!

O: Are there any projects you're excited about outside of Kestrels?

C: I've been producing and mixing records. I worked on the Orchids record, which was amazing! Those kids are incredibly talented. I'm also producing a record for Dan McCormick that blends Nova Scotia history, Cape Breton in the '90s, bagpipes, Jazzmasters, and wild fuzz. It's one of the wildest records I've ever heard. I'm also mixing the newest Gardner record. But my main focus is the next Kestrels album. I've got some really great songs for it.

O: Finally, what creative question are you trying to answer right now?

C: I'm chasing the feeling of being overwhelmed, the most powerful part of music for me. That feeling when a song hits you completely. I'm trying to figure out how to capture that feeling on a record, the way I feel it when listening to other people's music. That's the question I'm still chasing!

Osty: You grew up in Ottawa, correct? How did the 90s Ottawa music scene shape you?

Tara: In the 90s, Ottawa was incredible for young music fans. There were tons of all-ages venues, festivals, and shows. I'd bus downtown with friends, and something was always happening. Places like The Pit and Two Steps Above, plus outdoor Market shows, featured bands like Furnaceface, Jim Bryson in Punch Buggy, Mushroom Explosion, and Skyscrapers. It was post-punk, mosh pits, loud and exciting.

T: Then touring bands came through. We got into the Halifax and Vancouver scenes, and our favorite bands played all-ages shows. It felt like heaven. I don't know if that exists now, but it was special.

O: Who were your earliest influences?

T: The Breeders, especially when "Cannonball" came out. That led me to start a band with two friends; we knew three chords and banged on pots and pans. Later, Eric's Trip and Love Tara were huge for me. That lo-fi, alt-folk sound stuck: Elliott Smith, Elevator to Hell, that vein. Recently, Christian Lee Hutson.

Q: That band was Hitchhiked?

T: Yes. Bedroom beginnings. It was me, Jillian Henderson, Janet McDonald, and Jeremy Gara, who later played with Arcade Fire. We covered The Breeders, and The Pixies "Wave of Mutilation" in 1996. People compared us to Cub or Mint Records, due to our twee, poppy sound. Two songs on my new record are reworked Hitchhiked songs.

Q: Why did the band end?

T: University. We split up geographically. We recorded an EP and a track for the Les Amis du Sloan compilation in the mid-90s, but nothing was released. I still have home videos, footage from The Tom Green Show, and some local tour memories. It was a friendly, inclusive scene.

Q: Could the EP come out?

T: Maybe. Jeremy lives in Australia now though.

Q: You also made a zine?

T: Yes, *FFiction*. We were bored kids. It started as a DIY magazine, then became band interviews. We'd bring snacks and talk to bands before shows.

O: How did Hitchhiked shape your songwriting?

T: I always wrote for multiple voices—harmonies, no clear lead. Even solo now, I need harmonies. The process hasn't changed: melodies haunt me, journaling & poetry turn into songs. Real life mixed with fiction.

O: What about Sloannet?

T: Sloannet was chosen family. I was 14–16, and it felt safe. It taught me music is community, not competition. After years away for vet school, work, and family, I returned to shows and remembered why I belong here.

O: How does your work support music now?

T: I left a government job and started an in-home end-of-life care business for animals. I control my time, work four days a week, and make space for music. I do this for fun. I love being on stage.

O: Top records of 2025?

Christian Lee Hutson - Paradise Pop. 10, MJ Lenderman - Manning Fireworks; Wednesday - Bleeds; Cameron Winter - Heavy Metal; Geese; Zoon - Bleached Waves, Lucy Dacus, Jasmine 4.t.

O: Favorite 1995 show?

T: Edgefest. Thrush Hermit doing their Steve Miller covers set was incredible, Super Friends, Eric's Trip. The Halifax scene was unreal.

O: Thanks Tara. Lovely chat.

T: Likewise. Happy New Year.

© Photos submmited by Tara

You can find Tara's music at https://amityecho.bandcamp.com/album/this-girl-talks-to-birds-lo-fi-acoustic-version

DECISIONS: SPACE BUD

In late December, at a local Tim Hortons in Sydney,NS, I had the oppourtunity to speak to the lead vocalist/guitarist of Charlottetown indie-rock band SPACE BUD, Paul Chaisson.

Osty: Paul, how did you begin with music?

Paul: Music's always been a big part of my life. I grew up in the iPod era. I started on piano but dropped it in middle school, then picked up guitar and fell in love. I didn't start a band until my early twenties, but music's always been close to me. I love playing & collecting different gear.

O: Was Space Bud your first band?

P: No, I had a high school band called The Elusive Kings. We were more folk-rock and played around Prince Edward Island; Common Circuit, Old Dublin Pub, Trailside Café. Everyone from that band is still making music, which feels special.
We only released one song on Bandcamp, but it was a great starting point.

O: How did Space Bud come together?

P: We all lived in Charlottetown. After an Absolute Losers show at Murphy's Community Hall, Spencer and I were inspired and started jamming right away, just bass, drums and guitar in my dad's garage. Julian played with us early on and appears on the record. It started very casually.

O: What defined the band early on?

P: We began as a jam band, just making music for ourselves. Our first show was about six months in: an outdoor gig at Peake's Quay Wharf. We had no plan, amps cranked, and somehow a huge crowd gathered. It was chaotic and stressful, but it made us realize we should keep going. Live shows became the heart of the band.

O: What influences does everyone bring?

P: There's a lot:Talking Heads, Wire, Eric's Trip, Sheryl Crow, classic indie rock, jazz, Pink Floyd, The Strokes.

O: How did recording Decisions & Satellite differ?

P: We played the songs live for over a year before recording. Around 2023, I set up a studio in my apartment. Luckily our neighbors were musicians and super understanding.

P: We recorded drums, then beds, learning as we went. "Decisions" was first, then with Music PEI support we expanded the process into a full album. It took about two years in chunks, but working with mixer Adam Gallant helped everything lock in.

P: Recording forced us to commit: to lyrics, arrangements, choices. It gave us confidence.

O: Why focus on physical releases?

P: Digital matters, but physical objects feel meaningful again. I burned the CDs, assembled the cases, and made stickers. It's meditative for me.

Justin Rix shot the photos, and we tied the visuals to the gear used on the record.

We also directed our own video for "Satellite"; TVs, amps, lights. Doing it ourselves keeps it fun and empowering.

O: What are you listening to lately?

P: Sharp Pins, Pink Pantheress, Freddie Gibbs, Boldy James, Geese. Genre doesn’t matter. If it’s exciting, I’m in.

O: How do lyrics usually come together?

P: Instrumentals first. I improvise sounds and words, then shape them into something clearer.

The album deals with comparison, self-image, and emotional disconnect, but lately I'm aiming for simpler stories and more positive imagery. Books, movies, VHS. Older tech slows you down and makes you commit, and that really inspires me:

O: Anything gear-wise that defines Space Bud?

P: Old Garnet amps from Winnipeg: They are loud, simple, affordable. Minimal pedals.

Analog recording into digital, mostly Ableton. That's a big part of the Space Bud sound.

You can stream SPACEBUDs latest singles via https://spacebud.bandcamp.com/

Photo by Justin Rixx

CONDUCTOR

SPIRITS RISE!

PHOTOS: OSTY GALE - December 27, 2025

In mid-December, I spoke with Tanner Leudy, lead guitarist, & Nathan Hines, lead vocalist of local hard rock outfit **CONDUCTOR**.

During our chat, we discussed the bands latest LP, Spirits Rise, their influences this time round, touring, band beginnings & more...

Band Beginnings & early songs:

Tanner: The band officially came together around 2022, though it started loosely. After another hardcore project ended and COVID hit, we found ourselves diving deep into ’60s and ’70s rock music that’s always been our foundation.

We began as a garage rock trio before shifting quickly into heavier territory.

“Garage rock is great, but it puts you in a narrow box… With this style, we have a much wider range of influence.”

Early songs leaned on *Brown Acid*-style hard rock and proto-metal. A few unserious phone demos survived from that era, including the live-only crowd favorite “Magic Bong", itself a take of The Who's "Magic Bus", with original lyrics.

“Even the bad songs have people who love them.”

Nathan: We don’t set expectations or try to chase a specific sound. We just write what we like and record honestly.

“If you overthink it or try to make ‘the record that makes you famous,’ you’re setting yourself up to be miserable.”

Albums feel like time capsules. The first record was loose and raw; Spirits Rise reflects growth from touring, tighter playing, and bigger stages.

“As long as we’re proud of the record years later, that’s what matters.”

Recording the Record :

The debut, CONDUCTOR (2024) was recorded live over a weekend in Tanner’s dad’s garage. SPRITIS RISE was more deliberate, spread across multiple locations and late-night sessions.

Nathan: Colin Kelly pushed the band harder this time. “I’d rather redo something ten times than listen back a year later and regret it.”

There was no outside label pressure. Saturn Eye Records gave full freedom. “No deadlines, no demands.”

Working With Colin Kelly:

Pre-production was more intentional, especially guitar solos and vocals.

Nathan:"Vocally, I was pushed the most."

On Spirits Rise, the namesake track, Beth Landry's harmonies raised the bar instantly.

"Colin told me I had to match her level."

Colin's musicality pushed everyone forward.

"Everyone grew from making this record."

Guest Contributions:

Tanner: John Gill added organ and keys effortlessly, tracking multiple songs in a single night. "Whatever we asked for, he delivered immediately."

Guest parts are always additive; the songs are written as a four-piece first and still work live without extras.

The Songwriting Process:

Nathan: "Sometimes stepping away is what saves a song." Ideas can start with riffs, words, or structure, but nothing's finished until everyone adds their part. If a song doesn't come together naturally, it usually stalls.

Influences on Spirits Rise:

The record leans more melodic and dual-guitar focused, drawing from Thin Lizzy, Wishbone Ash, early Scorpions, and late-'70s hard rock where groove met heaviness.

"That space where hard rock, proto-metal, and southern rock overlapped."

"Rock and Rollers With One Foot in the Grave": ZZ Top–inspired boogie with intentionally loose vocals.

"Chasing Vice": Based on a real-life moment of a friend, summed up by the phrase itself.

"Chasing Vice is about doing what you want without judgment."

Live vs. Studio:

Live versions stay close to the record, with longer solos and extended endings when time allows.

"We only play covers we personally love. Never crowd-pleasers."

The Future:

The band plans to keep recording and touring when possible, balancing music with real life.
"The goal is to keep building… and seeing how far it goes." Canada-wide touring is on the horizon.

Future Collaborations & Music videos?

Both: We'd love to work with Ian Blurton or PJ Dunphy but will continue recording locally with Colin.
Music videos aren't a priority unless the concept feels right.

Nathan: "We won't do one just to do one."

Thanks CONDUCTOR! Stream their newest at: https://conductorheavy.bandcamp.com/album/spirits-rise

PHOTOS: OSTY GALE - December 27, 2025

TOP __ of 2025:

1. Cage The Elephant / Oasis N1+2
2. Jonathan Richman N2
3. The Killers / Lights / Alvvays - Halifax
4. Joel Plaskett - Baddeck August
5. The Boojums, Nate & The Busy Boys et al. - Gobblefest
6. Jon Creeden & The Flying Hellfish - Glace Bay, 11/29
7. Sloan - Red Farm Field Trip
8. The Orchids - Daniels 12/27
9. Blue Rodeo
10. BBQ Pope, Flamingoes Pink, 10-Slip
11. Ivy Gardens
12. Al Tuck
13. Christmas In Cape Breton -12/25
14. Customer Service
15. Boojums / Kelly McMichael
16. B.A. Johnston
17. Buzzcocks / Descendents
18. Sam Moon Birthday Bash
19. Julie Doiron / Stars - Night 2
20. Surprise Pink / Piggy - Halifax

Albums:

1. LEN - Get Your Legs Broke
2. Ultra Vivid Scene - Joy 1967-1990
3. LEN - Superstar
4. The Orchids - The Orchids
5. Brunch Club - Another Wasted Summer

Events:

- Being in the Moment.
- Moments of wonder & happiness.
- Being with great friends and people.
- Weddings & Celebrations.
- New Year!

Films:

1. Weapons
2. Mississippi Burning
3. One Battle After Another
4. Pavements: Slow Century
5. Caught Stealing
6. Don't Worry Darling
7. Frankenstein